

**A Friendly Letter  
TO ALL  
YOUNG MEN,**

Shewing the Benefit of a  
Religious and Friendly  
*Reproof, Conversation,  
& Admonition;*

And not only to live good Lives themselves, but to encourage others to do the same.

With a Letter to  
**Masters of Families.**

To which is added,  
A Specimen of the *Rules and Orders* of  
the *Religious Societies*, as now Practised in  
the Cities of *London and Westminster.*

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**The Fifth Edition.**

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*Remember thy Creator in the Days of  
thy Youth, Eccles. 12. 1.*

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THE  
P R E F A C E  
TO THE  
R E A D E R.

**T**HE Bookseller being upon Printing another Edition of the *Friendly Letter to all Young Men*, I thought it might not be amiss, in order to the Increasing these Religious Societies, to print those Excellent Gospel Rules and Orders the First Edition speaks of, being such as have been approved of by many Eminent Divines of the Church of England, and which are agreeable to the Practice of the best Christians, in the first and purest Ages of the Church, and such as I hope will induce the Reader to set up such a Religious Society amongst his Neighbours, where much good may be done, as there  
have

## to the Reader.

*hath already been by them in the Cities of London and Westminster, and several other Places in this Kingdom, as well as in Ireland; (by which means great Numbers of poor House-keepers have been Relieved, poor Children kept to School, and after put Apprentices.) The Bishop of Sarum, in his Essay on the Memory of our late Gracious QUEEN, page 118. gives this Account of her Opinion and Satisfaction of these Societies in these Words; She did hearken carefully after every thing that seemed to give some hope that the next Generation should be better than the present, with a particular Attention: She heard of a Spirit of Devotion and Piety that was spreading it self among the Youth of this great City, with a true Satisfaction: She enquired often and much about it, and was glad to hear it went on and prevailed.*

*Some of these Societies have (by their pious Examples) influenced Dissenters to come to Church, and several Anabaptists and Quakers to Baptism; and have been a means of preserving from Popery several Unsteady and Wavering people, in the late times: And being not insensible of their own and others Infirmities, they keep up these Societies, in meeting together once a Week, that they may*

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re-inforce on each others Minds the great Principles of Christianity, in order to the carrying on those good Works they are already engaged in, and which, I hope, will induce the Reader to an Imitation.

My Design in this little Treatise is only to assist the Ignorant, and those who are willing to form themselves into Societies, they being so very beneficial to Youth, as well as to those of Riper Years. For as there is nothing in its self more Excellent than Religion; so you cannot imagine the unspeakable Advantages a Pious Youth gains by the Practice of it in these Societies.

Do but consider how welcome a Young Convert is to God: It was to young Samuel that God revealed himself, to shew how much He honoured a young Propber, 1 Sam. 3. 1. And you know that St. John, the Youngest of all the Disciples, is the only Person of all the Twelve, who was permitted to lean on our Saviour's Bosom at the last Supper, as dearest in Affection to Him, and who is called, the Disciple whom Jesus loved, John 13. 23. And this is suitable to that Gracious Promise which God hath made, to incourage all Young Persons to serve Him; I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me, Prov. 18. 7.



## to the Reader. :

O Young Man, whosoever thou art, that readest this Promise, let it excite in thee a great Zeal to seek God, and to seek Him early; for if thou dost seek, thou art sure to find Him: thou art sure when thou hast found Him, he will love thee, and thou shalt reap all the happy effects of God's Infinite Love, and of an early Piety; and the Pleasure of well-doing that thou wilt at present feel.

Think if you can how unconceivable a Joy it will be to you, when in your Elder years you can reflect on your well-spent time, and the Innocence of your Youth; how great a Consolation it will be to you when you come to your Death-bed; how easie it will render your Accounts at the great Day of Judgment; and how much a whole Life spent in God's Service will increase your Glory in the other World.

Therefore consider the vast Necessity and the Advantage there is of beginning to be good betimes; for we know not but that the next moment may determine our Everlasting Fate; and the hopes of Heaven, which we have now in our Hands, may slip from us before to Morrow Morning, and so leave us desperate for Ever.

Therefore consider what a dreadful venture you run, if you delay your Time of Salvation, or put it off from Day to Day; and the longer

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*you delay, the more averse you will be to it; for your Lusts will every Day grow dearer and dearer unto you, and you will find your selves more and more unwilling to part with them: Therefore make no delay, but take the Wise Man's Advice, and make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put it not off from Day to Day.*

*And let this Consideration ingage you further, to think what Engagements you ly under to an Holy Life by your own Profession, Promises and Vows; for you profess and call your selves Christians, Followers of Christ, ought you not then to follow his Example, and obey his Commands, if you will make good that Name? You will think it a great Disgrate not to be taken for Christians, but for a Turk or Jew: Beware then, lest you bring this Disgrace upon your self by an unchristian Temper of Mind, and ill course of Life; for if you are False, or Cruel; Covetous, or Lustful; Proud, or Revengeful, like a Turk or Heathen, it matters little what you call your self: For he is not a Christian, that is one outwardly; but he that hath the same Mind and Spirit that was in Christ Jesus: For God will not, at the Last Day, Judge Men by their Names and Titles, but by their Hearts and Lives; only it will go much worse with a Man that  
calls*

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*calls himself a Christian, and lives like a Turk or Infidel. Therefore make no Delay about a Holy Life, but strive, and use your utmost endeavour to make your self what you will wish to be when you come to die.*

*And one great means to effect this will be, to keep such Company as are already ingaged in a Holy Life; for to hear the Discourse of Religious Men delights us, and their Company is the most Beneficial; and it is That which I recommend in the following Letter, and that I would desire you to read seriously over and over again, not as School-Boys do their Lessons; but apply it to your self as you read, and consider whether you are of such a Temper or no that this Letter recommends; and if you are, persevere in it to the end, remembring that gracious Promise, He that endureth to the End shall be saved; if you are not, make no delay, but strive to find out some of those Men that live good Lives, and they will be a Help and Benefit to you: But above all, acquaint your self with a sober Minister, and consult him with the great concernments of your Soul: Remember alway that this is a Work that must not be delayed; for we know not what a Day may bring forth: Therefore take St. Paul's Advice, with which I shall conclude, Rom. 13. 12, 13, 14. Let us therefore cast off the Works of*

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Darkness, and let us put on the Armor of Light. Let us walk Honestly as in the Day: not in Rioting and Drunkenness, not in Chambering and Wantonness, not in Strife and Envy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus-Christ, and make no Provision for the Flesh, to fulfill the Lusts thereof.

*Heb. 13. 20, 21.* Now the God of Peace that brought again from the Dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant, Make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his Sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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## A Friendly Letter

TO ALL  
YOUNG MEN, &c.

**D**early Beloved Brethren, and Fellow-Members of the Church of *England*, it is to you that I now Write, as a Friend and a Brother; for such we should all be one to another; and our Saviour makes it the great visible Badge of Christianity; *By this (saith he.) shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one for another.*

Now, this Divine Grace of *Love* and *Charity* being the Foundation of all *Religion*, let it shew its self that it is in our Hearts, by a true and sincere Desire of *doing Good* to one another, and to all Men, to their precious and Immortal Souls; and let us look upon it as our Duty, the Endeavouring to save them; and the only means whereby to effect that Work is, to promote Godli-

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ness in the World, and Holiness of Life; for  
*without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.*

Now, to the Promoting of *Godliness* in the World, nothing is more effectual than the frequent Conversation of *Christians* with each other: *This* is a Truth that may be manifested from divers Arguments: This is that therefore which in this *Letter* I would chiefly recommend to you; to wit, *Christian Conversation and Society.*

Man is a Creature made for Society; it is by *That* that he eases his Mind, by Communicating his Thoughts; it is by *That* that he receives Comfort, by the Counsel of others, and gets Wisdom by their Admonition and Advice; nay, it is by *That* (as an Instrument by which the Holy Spirit does work) that he gets Grace: For all Conversation is of an assimilating Nature; that is, it makes Men become like to those they converse withall; and, consequently, the same effect may be reasonably hop'd for from *Christian Conversation.* And this may be further manifested from the Practice of Satan, whose Business it is therefore, in the first place, to divert Men from Christian Conversation; and this he effects, *First*, By bringing Reproach on such Assemblies, as *Phanatical*, and  
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tending to *Schism*, thereby affrighting weak Christians, who have not strength to indure Shame for the Name of *Christ*, or that have not Judgment to determine rightly of *Enthusiasm* and *Schism*. And, *Secondly*, by Furnishing of Men with Diversity of other Conversation; and for this End he has set up *Prophane and Atheistical Clubs* in *Taverns* and *Ale-Houses*, and other *Merry Meetings*, which tend much to the Promoting of his Kingdom; because (beside other Evils) they keep Men from serious and pious Discourse; for, see what is the Discourse of every *Tavern-Club*, of every *Coffee-House-Table*, of every *Merry Meeting*. What Discourse do you there meet with that is *season'd with Grace*, and to the use of *Edifying*, which, the Apostle tells us, all our Discourse ought to be? It were to be wish'd, that it were no worse than *Idle*; and yet, for every *Idle Word* that Men shall speak, (our Saviour assures us) they shall give an Account at the *Day of Judgment*. And if there should be some good Christians among them in such Places, yet, How are they daunted? How little Courage have they to promote any spiritual or savory Discourse? How ashamed to reprove any Prophaneness or filthy Talk? till, by degrees, from using to hear such things



things without Reproving them, they grow cold in their Zeal for Religion, and, at length, become insensible: so very true it is what the Apostle says, that *Evil Communication corrupts even good Manners*: It is like an infectious Disease, it gets into our Nature, and we know not how, and spreads its self into all our Words and Actions.

This is a true Reason why Christians are so cold in their Devotions, so tardy in their Journey Heaven-ward, even because they converse too much with the Men of the World, which, the Holy Ghost assures us, is *Enmity to God*: because they are so far taken with one Man's Wit, another's good Humour, a third's Raillery, as to wink at his Prophaneness, his lewd Jest, his impudent Slander; and so by growing cool in their Zeal for Virtue, Piety, and the Glory of God, they at length sink insensibly into an unthinking State; whereas if we followed the Apostle's Advice, *with a Brother that were a Fornicator, or a Worldling, no not to eat*, we should then be sure of keeping alive that Fervor and Holy Zeal in our Hearts, which alone denominate us Christians.

Now since it is most manifest, That nothing does more promote the Kingdom of Satan than these publick Clubs, Why should  
not

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not good Christians counterminne them, by making *Sober Societies* among themselves? For in Company with Religious Persons, one is tempted to utter those good things which weak Christians are ashamed to speak before the Wicked; and we should have great Incouragement to speak what might be to the use of *Edifying*, and *ministring Grace* to the Hearers, and should our selves soon find the Benefit of keeping such Company. *I am* (saith Holy David) *the Companion of all those that fear Thee, and keep thy Righteous Judgments.*

*Can a Man touch Pitch,* (saith the Prophet) *and not be defiled therewith? Can a Man carry Fire in his Bosom, and his Cloaths not be burnt?* So neither can a Man walk in the Path of the Ungodly, but if he hast not out of it, he will soon come to stand in the ways of Sinners, and, at last, to sit down in the Seat of the Scornful; to mock at all Religion, and then his Case is desperate.

I cannot sufficiently caution you against so dangerous a Temptation as that of *Ill Company*; and especially, because there are so many Snares to draw Men into Company in general, of which the chiefest and (as is commonly thought) the most innocent is, *To divert and pass away the Time.* But,

O consider what a sad thing it is to drive away that Time which flies away too fast. Consider that your whole Life, if you were sure of its duration, is but a short time for to sit and prepare your Soul for an Eternity; in which, if you should miscarry, you are for ever Wretched and Miserable.

That Word, *Pastime*, is a Word of the Devil's making; the Holy Scripture says the direct contrary, *Redeem the Time*. Consider the difficulty of the Work you are to do, and then you will think the Time but too little. You are to become a *New Creature* throughout, changed in every respect from your present vain Conversation: Your Immortal Spirit came pure out of God's Hand, you have here polluted it by the Vanities of the World, which are at *Enmity with God*; you must return it to Him either Innocent, (which is impossible) or wash'd with the Tears of Repentance; which Repentance does consist in a Change of your present Course, and a Turning to God. So that your Will must be first chang'd before you can be accepted of Him. You are therefore to be *renewed in the Spirit of your Mind*; to mortifie and subdue all those Lusts and Affections you now so study to please: you are to root out that Revenge which

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which you *Now* think so justifiable upon an Affront; and to take up that Meekness which you *Now* so much contemn for Cowardice in others: you are to break off that pursuit which you *Now* make after Riches; and instead of being so careful for the Morrow, you are, in the sober Use of proper Means, to cast all your Care upon God, to put your whole Trust and Confidence in his Providence, and in all your Undertakings contentedly leave the Issue to Him.

You are to endeavour the Change of your whole Nature; to rejoyce in Tribulation, which is *Now* so grievous: to distribute liberally the Wealth you *Now* hoard up: to mortifie and keep under the Flesh you *Now* pamper: to merit, by well-doing, the Hatred of the World, whose Applause you *Now* so much seek: to contemn all those Pleasures in which you *Now* consume your Time: and when you have done all this, and a great deal more, there is yet a bitter Cup of Repentance behind, for all those sinful Thoughts, Words, and Actions, which, through Frailty or Wilfulness, you have (through the Strength of your corrupt Nature) been drawn into; and also for those Numberless Sins of Omission, which so few think of.

This

This Work of *Repentance* is so much the Duty of our Lives, that it is the very Condition of our Salvation; for by it only is Christ's *Redemption* apply'd to us; that is, He has, by his Death, made our Repentance available for the Pardon of our Sins. How inexcusable then are we, who thus have, by God's Grace, the Means put into our Hands of qualifying our selves for the Pardon of our Sins, and, consequently, for Eternal Happiness, if we shall fool away that Time in which this great Work must be done, and then think to set about it when *Time shall be no more*; when all Means of Reconciling our selves to our offended God shall be removed far from us?

What Multitudes are there now in Hell, who sought for *Pastime* in their Youth, and thought to Repent when they grew Old? *Wo!* be to them that are with Child in those days! (when the Days of Tribulation are come upon them) that conceive good Resolutions; but the Days of Darknes overtake them before they bring forth any thing. Consider this therefore ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you. If you stop your Ear now to his Call, (and even *This* is one of his Calls), and are resolved to *Enjoy the Pleasures of Sin,*

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*Sin*, which are but for a *Season*, a very short Season, the Time will come when *you* will call and cry, and then *He* will not hear; but then *He* will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh.

Would you then escape the Terrors of that dismal Day, that *Great and Terrible Day of the Lord*, the Doom of which shall last to all Eternity? Be instant in Prayer to God for his Assistance, to work that Change in you which I before-mentioned, and then set about it your self with the utmost Diligence; lose no Time, but *Flee for thy Life*, (as the Angel said to *LOT*) and look not behind thee. *Work out your Salvation to Day*, while it is called to Day, before the Night comes, when no Man can work; for unless you do beget in your Mind a Love to Heavenly things while you are here, (and which cannot be done all of a sudden) Heaven will not be Heaven to you when you come there: You will not, you cannot then relish what you have been so unacquainted withall, and the contrary to which you have been all along so used to and delighted with.

Now one of the best Means to do all this is, To avoid evil Conversation, and to seek for Good; for, as I said before, the  
Nature

Nature of Man requires Conversation and Society : And, in a Christian State, he that will travel alone in the Way to Heaven, because it is narrow, will often want a hand to lift him out of the Mire of Temptation, a Companion to support him in the Storm of Persecution, and even a Guide to admonish him to avoid the rugged and rocky Ways of Imprudent Zeal, and to help him out of the Thorny Paths of a Scrupulous and Doubting Conscience ; to all which, a Christian Conversation is the greatest Help in this World.

Christian Society is like a Bundle of Sticks laid together, one *kindles* another, and that *First* even by Example ; To see an Injured Christian, Meek ; a Rich one, Charitable ; a Great one, Humble ; a Mean and Ignorant one, Obedient, and Thankful for Instruction ; an Infirm and Sickly one, Thirsting after Heaven, and looking down with Pity on the Vanities of this World ; a Christian can hardly be in such Company without Edifying his Soul thereby.

Art thou Dejected through Losses, or Disappointments in thy Fortune ? Lo here another much Poorer than thou, yet giving God Thanks for his Bounty to him : Art thou Tempted by Lust ? Lo here another  
Christian



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Christian Lustier and Stronger, who yet, by Mortification and Self-denial, by Fasting and Prayer, keeps his Soul and Body Pure, and the *Fit Temple of the Holy Ghost*: Art thou grovelling in the World, and eating the *Bread of Carefulness*? Lo here a Heavenly-minded Christian, *having nothing, and yet possessing all things*; that can say, *I know how to abound, and to be in want; yea, I count all things but Dung that I may gain Christ.*

But though this be a great Benefit of Christian Conversation, for our Example thus to see in the same Person, the Christian Mixtures of Greatness, and Humility; of Suffering, and Meekness; of Poverty, and Contentedness; of Knowledge, and Modesty; of Pain, and Patience; which nothing could unite but that which will make the *Lamb and the young Lion to lie down together*; yet the Hearing of the Ear in this is yet of more Benefit than the Seeing with the Eye.

Indeed the silent Arguments of Example work even upon the Natural Man; but Discourse edifies more the Christian by Grace; for *Faith comes by Hearing*. And therefore, in the *Second* place, one Christian *kindles* another by Consolation, Counsel, Admonition, Instruction, and *Reproof*, which, though it be every ones Duty to do, yet

yet none performs it but the true Christian ; he who has a greater Love for other Mens Souls, than for their Favour or Esteem. For want of the Discharge of this one Duty alone, How many Thousand well-disposed Persons are utterly lost ? who cannot of themselves see *the Sin that does so easily beset them* : Witness David, who could not see whilst himself was Party, and lived near a Year insensibly under the Guilt of *Murther* and *Adultery*. Certainly Miserable is the Man that has no such Friend, and none can be such a Friend but the Christian ; for, he that does not *cast the Beam out of his own Eye*, before he pretends to *take the Mote out of his Neighbours*, his Reproof will be taken for Envy or ill Nature, and so will Exasperate rather than Melt.

But, *Thirdly*, this Christian Conversation might be yet more highly improv'd, and render'd much more beneficial to our Souls, if we would, in conversing together, so seriously consider the Graces we want, and the Blessings we enjoy, as by God's Ordinances of Prayer and Praise, and the Reading of his Word, to bring Christ into our Company, to have Him in the midst of us, O how happy would that Meeting be ! (and even this we have his sure Word of Promise

Promise for ; ) then would our Meetings be every Day for the Better to us, and we should rejoyce to come often together, and even enjoy that Communion of Saints which we hope to be of in Heaven. A Zeal for God's Glory, a Thirst for his Ordinances, a tender Love and Pity to the Souls of Men, and a Strictness of Life, would *then* insensibly grow upon us, so that we should be *habitually* prepared for all Holy Duties, for the Blessed Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper, and even for a sudden Departure out of this World, if it should please God so to call us hence ; and might hope to be reckoned of the Number of those of whom the Prophet *Malachi* speaks, saying, *Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his Name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my Jewels, and I will spare them as a Man spareth his own Son that serveth him.*

I know there are those that would count you Troublesome, and Busie-bodies, to give *them* Advice, or to pretend to concern your selves about their Souls ; but, however, let  
not

not this discourage you; for, of those you give Advice to, or admonish, if but *One* in *Twenty* hears you seriously, you have no reason to repent the Loss of your Labour in all the rest: Nay, if even that it self should not happen, yet for Religion's sake you should not hold your Peace; for, Shall Men be Impudent in the Devil's Service, and shall we be Ashamed to own God's? Is the Great God and our Maker become so inconsiderable in our Esteem, that we dare not stand by Him, when Men dare stand up for their Vices? Is Eternal Salvation so indifferent a thing, that we should be unconcerned for it? Do we see the Vices of the Age Growing and Spreading, and shall not we stand in Opposition to them? Therefore, since one teaches another Vice, let us teach each other Virtue; since one guides another to Hell, let us help one another forward in the Way to Heaven; and as they make one another Prophane, let us teach one another Righteousness in all our *Conversation* and *Friendly Societies*; and let us encourage others to do the same by our Advice and Example, that *Religion* may once more become a general Practice; that our Churches may be fuller, and the Publick Prayers more frequented by all that are true

true Members thereof; and those *that name the Name of Christ may depart from Iniquity.*

For if it be Charity to direct the Blind in his Way, or when we see our Neighbour in danger of being Robbed, or his House in danger of being Burnt, if to run and help him is Charity; then certainly it is greater Charity to instruct the Ignorant, by shewing them the right way to *Salvation.* And therefore, if you see your Christian Brother, your Neighbour or Fellow-Servant, in danger of being Ruin'd by keeping ill Company, or their Souls in danger of Hell-Fire by Prophaning the Lord's-Day, by Neglecting his Laws, and Forsaking his Commandments, to help such, by Godly Advice and Admonition, is a great Deed of Charity; nay, it is your Duty too; for thus saith the Lord, *Levit. 19. 17. Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart: Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer Sin upon him.* Be not Guilty then of this great Crime upon any Pretence whatsoever; But Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin; knowing that he that converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Ways, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall cover a multitude of Sins.

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All the Texts almost of the Holy Scripture point to this Duty, either by Exhorting or Commanding us to set about this Necessary Work, first to lead good Lives our selves, and then to encourage others to do the same. I do not exhort you to Controversie, nor to meddle much with those of another Persuasion, for that is the Minister's Work; but this is your *One thing needful*, to meddle with those that own the same Church, and profess the same Faith, and yet act contrary to it in their Lives and Conversations. Put *these* in mind of their Baptismal Vow; How they then promised to renounce the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and yet do live within the Embraces of them all. Ask them, How they dare blame others for their Unbelief, while they live like Atheists themselves? How they dare condemn others, for separating from the Church, when their own Lives and Conversations are quite contrary to the Holy Doctrines thereof? How they dare reproach others for want of Seriousness, when they live loose Lives themselves: and are so far from Remembering their Creator in the Days of their Youth, that they forget Him and his Laws all their Days? But intreat them to take the Wise Man's Counsel, That they  
*make*

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*make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put it not off from day to day. Put them in mind of the great Benefit of a Holy Life and early Piety, and what a Pleasure it will be when they come to die, to look back upon a well-spent Life, and be able to say with Hezekiah upon a Death-Bed, Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in Truth, and with a perfect Heart, and have done that which was right in thine Eyes.*

And you that have already tasted those Joys which arise from a good Conscience, and the Pleasures of a Godly Life and Conversation, *fall not from your own Stedfastness;* and since you see Wicked Men take such Pains to serve their Lusts, to please their Senses, and gratifie their Appetites, be you at some Pains also to serve your God, to advance his Glory, yea, and to encourage others likewise to do the same. And if there be but *Two* in a Street that intend really to serve God, to frequent the Sacrament, and the Prayers of the Church, let them make it their Business to perswade *Two* more to do the same, and let your Prayers be frequent and fervent to God, that He would increase the Number of true Believers, and that it would please Him to bring into the Way of Truth, all such as have erred and are deceived. B This



This would be one great Means to mend the World, and without this it will hardly be done; it is not good Books, nor good Preaching, that will reclaim a Prophane and Profligate Wretch; for such Persons will neither read good Books, nor hear Sermons; they are out of the reach of all other Methods, except Counsel, Advice, and Exhortation, and oftentimes they refuse that too. But when good Men are as Bold as evil Men are Impudent, and as openly Good as others are Bad; when Piety has Authority in it, and frowns Prophane-ness out of Countenance, then the World will mend; and if not grow Devout, yet, at least, grow Modester and Civiller toward Religion, when Virtuous Men give good Evidence that they do believe in good Earnest, by endeavouring the Punishment of all vicious and open Offenders, as the Law directs.

And altho *Piety* is now-a-days laugh'd at, and *Religion* out of Fashion, yet (that I may now shew you how to Practise what I have been hitherto Recommending, (I mean a *Christian Conversation and Society*) I must tell you, that there are some Christians in this Barren Age, and those of considerable Rank and Quality, who think

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it is so far from unbecoming them, that nothing is more acceptable to them than Pious Discourse, and the Company of such Men as endeavour to make the Word of God their Rule to walk by.

And I have both known & heard of some Numbers of Religious Men in this City, who Meet at one anothers Houses, usually every Week, or as often as Occasions permit, and there make it their Business to inforce upon one anothers Minds the great Principles of Christianity; to live up to the Doctrines of our Church; to frequent the Holy Sacrament every Lord's-Day; and the Publick Prayers every Day; they having a quick sense of Piety, and a great concern upon them for another World; they endeavour to preserve this Temper in themselves, and to propagate it to others; and many good *Rules* they have among them; and by their frequent *Meetings* they take Notice of each others Virtues, and so they strive to imitate each other. In one, there abounds the Grace of Meekness; in another, is a great Christian Courage and Zeal to stand up for God's Glory; in another, Patience; in another, Self-denial and Mortification; in another, a Zeal for Peace-making; and this makes

them the more to desire each other's Company, as being Monitors to one another by their Example. And this is one of their Rules, *Never to speak Ill of one another*; and if, at any time, they hear Ill of one another, or of any other good Christian, they first go and see if it be true what envious Men do report of him, rightly considering, that as one Man may *do amiss*, so may another more easily *speak amiss*, that being *the Sin that does so easily beset every Man*: and also, that as Society is the Excellency and great Blessing of Mankind, so Slander and Reproach, Censuring and Evil-speaking, poysons and destroys all Love and Charity in the World: But if it prove true that such an one *has been overtaken in a Fault*, they take the Apostle's Advice, and *restore him in the Spirit of Meekness*, considering themselves also may be Tempted.

At these Meetings there is no Discourse of News, nor Trade, nor Worldly Business, or Controversie in Religion; but they take care that all their *Speech be season'd with Grace, and to the use of Edifying, and may minister Grace to the Hearers*: And therefore they apply themselves to the constant Reading and Studying of the Holy Scriptures, that *the Word of Christ may dwell richly*

## to all Young Men.

21

*richly in them, that so out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth may speak.* They do often, at these times, confer about the State of their Souls: they do examine into the Growth and Decay of Piety in general, and also particularly among themselves; and each shews what does most affect and influence *him*; and every one does frequently inculcate and stir up to Perfection.

Those that were *Gentlemen*, and had Leisure, made it *their* Business to order their *Conversation so as to adorn the Gospel*, and publickly to discountenance Vice, by the Promoting the Making of good Laws, and the Putting of them in Execution, knowing that their Example was necessary to influence Trades-Men to be Sober, to be Religious, and to be Just in all their Dealings, and to imitate *their Burning and Shining Lights*.

Those that were *Masters of Families* acted in their Stations like Men that believed in good earnest that there was a Judgment to come, a Heaven and a Hell; and that God would call all Men to an Account, what Good they have done in their Generation. This made them never to omit going to Prayers in their Families, and telling their Children and Servants what a Benefit it

will be to them to live in the Fear of God, and serve Him in their tender Years.

Those that were *Officers* in the Parishes they lived in, would suffer no Disorder in the Streets, nor no Night-Walker, no Drunkard, no Swearer, no Prophaner of the Lord's Day, to go Unpunished: And this was one end of joyning themselves into *Neighbourly Societies*, to consult upon Methods whereby to put a stop to Vice, and bring Men to a Sence of their Duty to God and Man: And thus they acted like Honest Men in their *Offices*, without Bribes, or Feasting upon the Parish Charge.

There was likewise another Sort of *Religious Societies*, and those were of *Young-Men*, that were *Apprentices*, *Servants*, and *Journey-Men*; and these strived to out-do the rest in Zeal and Piety; being not engaged in the World, they endeavour to Dedicate themselves to God in their tender Years. To this end they joyned themselves into *Societies*, and there met once a Week, perhaps in some Upper Room, to excite and stir up one another to avoid the Sins of the Age they liv'd in, and to imprint likewise upon other Mens Minds a Sence of Religion; to this end they set up, on the Lord's-Day, Sermons at Night, and the

the Sacrament in the Morning, and the Prayers every Night in the Week in divers Churches, that they might have Opportunity to go without wasting their Masters time; (and Instructed, at their own Charge, many poor Children in reading *English*, and in the Grounds of the *Christian Religion*) and where there was but one or two such in a Street, they made it their Business to get two more to do the same, so much was every one concerned for his Brother's Soul; and where they saw a Young Man in their Neighbourhood that had no Sence of Religion, but lived in Neglect of it, they strove to reclaim him, and so did increase the number of *True Believers*, and make the publick Prayers more frequented; and this makes Religion revive again, and come something toward its Primitive Institution. I have been but too short in giving you an Account of those Men, considering what other good Works they have done for our Example, whom we have great Reason to imitate, as you may see in the Reverend Mr. Woodward's Book of the *Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies*; as also in another Book, Entituled, *An Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners*.

And though you have perhaps seen or heard, that some few who have thus *begun in the Spirit, have ended in the Flesh*; yet let not this discourage you; *for he that endures to the End shall be saved*: but take our Saviour's Advice; for He tells us in St. Luke, *That no Man having set his hand to the Plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God*. And therefore, as you have begun by your Baptismal Vow, and by the Christian Profession you have since made, endeavour to go on from Vertue to Vertue. And you that have found the Comfort of leading a good Life, the Joy and Pleasure of a good Conscience, the Advantage and Benefit of frequenting the Blessed Sacrament, and the publick Service of the Church: You that now see the Odiousness of those Vices that others wallow in: That see the Beauty of that Vertue which others despise, and the Charms of that Grace that others laugh at: You that see the Reasonableness of Christ's Precepts, which others count an intollerable Yoke: In a word, You that have some Sense and Hopes of another World, while Thousands live as if there were none; O let not these Comforts be hid within your Breasts; but knowing *your selves Converted, strengthen*  
*your*



your Brethren, as is commanded by our Saviour in St. Luke; and St. Chrysostom tells us, *To know the Art of Alms, is greater than to be Crown'd with the Diadem of Kings; and yet, To convert one Soul, is greater than to pour out Ten Thousand Talents into the Basket of the Poor; therefore, according to St. Paul's Advice, Warn them that are unruly, Comfort the feeble-minded, Support the weak, be Patient towards all Men; see that none render Evil for Evil to any Man; but ever follow that which is good, both among your selves, and to all Men; and if you be laugh'd at for your pains, consider, that Blessed are they who shall be reviled for Christ's sake.* You may possibly cast your Pearl before Swine; but let them know, that mock at Religion and Piety, what a sad after-Reckoning They shall have, when the Judgment shall be set, and the Books opened, as in the Fifth Chapter of Wisdom, *Then shall the Righteous Man stand in great Boldness, before the Face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his Labours. When they see it, they shall be troubled with a terrible Fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his Salvation, so far beyond all they look'd for. Then they repenting, and groaning for Anguish, shall say within themselves, This was*

he whom we have had sometimes in Derision, and a Proverb of Reproach. We Fools counted his Life Madness, and his End to be without Honour. How is he numbred among the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints! Then in sorrow and grief of Heart shall they cry out upon themselves; What hath Pride profited us? or, What good hath Riches with our vaunting brought us? All those things are vanished like a Shadow, and as a Post that passeth by; but the Righteous live for evermore, their Reward is also with the most Highest. Warn them therefore by these Terrors of the Lord, that they stand in awe and sin not; but that they Die unto Sin, and Live unto Righteousness. Intreat them to consecrate the Morning, the Youth of their Age to God; and that they think it not enough to give Him the sleepest Hours of the Day, while they bestow the liveliest upon the World: nor to Sin as long as they can, and then turn to God. For, How many, alas! have been cut off in this foolish Stupidity, and know not by how small a Thread the Sword of Justice hangs over their Heads? for though God is Merciful, yet it is only to the Penitent; but he is also Just, and rewards every Man according to his works. He hath Magazines

of

of Vengeance, Store-Houses of Curses, and can ruine a sinful Creature a thousand ways; and yet, How Merry, notwithstanding all this, is the *Drunkard* over his Cups? And how boldly does the *Swearer* send up his dreadful Oaths to Heaven? and all this, because God is Merciful and Long-suffering. But, O let them know what a terrible Abuse it is, to let God's Mercy provoke them to Wantonness, and his Patience to cause Sin to live in their Souls; that his Goodness should tempt them to be Foolish, and his Compassion prompt them to affront his Glory; that his Kindness should prove their Bane, and that the Meat he gives them should increase their Corruption; that his Corn and Wine should be turn'd into Contempt of his Majesty, and that they should make use of the Ease he gives them to Fight against his Laws; that the Plenty they enjoy by his Providence, should encourage them to make War with Him, from whom all their Plenty flows. O what monstrous Provocations are these! If their Children or Servants should use *Them* so, what Punishments could they think too great for them? And must God put up Affronts which they will not? O bid them consider how He waits for their Repen-

Repentance, and invites them to it; *Turn ye, turn ye*, saith the Lord your God, *Why will ye die?* and yet they frustrate his Clemency. He is Patient, and would have them prevent the Blow; and yet they are ready to pluck it down on their heads. To such the Apostle speaks thus, *Rom. 2. 1. Therefore thou art unexcusable, O Man, whosoever thou art, that despisest the Riches of his Goodness, and Forbearance, and Long-suffering, not considering that the Goodness of God leads to Repentance.* Make them sensible therefore of the Benefit of Subduing their Lusts and Passions: Beg of them to restrain their inordinate Desires, and their sensual Appetites; to curb their Anger, and to put away all Hatred toward their Fellow-Christians; to root out their Covetousness; to advance in Charity toward their Neighbours; to grow Eminent in the Love of God; to keep Holy the Lord's-Day; to honour his Name, and obey his Laws. Put them in mind to come to the Publick Prayers of the Church, and tell them, that in the Publick Solemnities God opens his Treasures, and pours out his Grace more abundantly upon them. Private Devotions, and the secret Offices of Religion, are like the Refreshing of a Garden

den with the distilling and petty Drops of a Water-Pot ; but the Returns to Addresses made in the Temple, and Services offer'd up in the publick Communion of Saints, is like Rain from Heaven. Advise them to behave themselves decently in the House of God ; for to be rude and talking, to laugh and gaze about, or to do any Indecency in that Place, is to affront the Almighty to his very Face : And for their more devout Behaviour in the Church, recommend to them to read Dr. *Comber's Companion to the Temple* ; and another thing put them in mind of, not to repeat the *Absolution*, for that is to be pronounced by the Priest alone ; and this I urge, because I have observ'd some saying the Absolution along after the Priest, as if we could pardon our selves : nor to repeat the *Commandments* in the Church ; but we ought to hearken to them with Reverence, as if they were then spoken from God : neither should they repeat any of the *Prayers* with an audible Voice, except the *Lord's-Prayer* and the *Responses*, because they give great Disturbance to others in their Devotions.

And I would particularly recommend to every one, to buy and acquaint themselves with the *Thirty Nine Articles of the Church*  
of

of England, that they may lay a good Foundation, and have solid Principles to go by: I am afraid that some that think very well of themselves, do not rightly understand the Principles of their Religion. These *Articles* are as Sea-Marks, to shew what Rocks and Sands you are to avoid; and by being well acquainted with them, you will be able to give a good Account of the Doctrinal Part of our Religion; and this is an excellent Foundation to build the Practical Part upon.

And of all things, let me warn you that you do not, in any Religious Conversation or Society, or elsewhere, say or do any thing to the Disparagement of the *Ministry of the Church of England*, but ever preserve a due Respect for that Order: In all greater Difficulties resort to them, and pay them that Obedience and Honour which the Holy Ghost requires of you. And though there may be some bad Men among them, yet learn to distinguish the Order from the Defects that cleave to some of them; and for all the ill Lives or Weakness of some, do not condemn the rest, nor erect your selves into Teachers; but, with great Humility, edifie and encourage one another in Duties and Vir-

## to Masters of Families. 31

Virtues, which belong to all Christians. Pride & Self-conceitedness will ruine your Religion; and if Order and Decency be not preserved, your Meeting will become a Riot, not a Christian Society. Nothing will adorn your Piety more than a due Submission to your Pastors; and those that would entice you to despise Them, are certainly not your Friends, but Enemies: Therefore take the Apostle's Advice, *Heb. 13. 17. Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves: for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give account: that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

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AND now, in the last place, there is one thing more that I would particularly recommend to you that are *Masters of Families*; which is this, That you would make Conscience of going to Prayer with your Families at least once or twice a day; a Duty I think we may trace from our Father *Adam*; for he was no sooner fallen from his Innocence, and a Happy State,

but

*This following Part being took out of a private Letter a friend of mine designed for his Brother, I thought it might not be amiss to recommend it to you here.*



but was sensible *God* was Angry with him ; and he thought it necessary to implore the Offended Deity by *Prayer* and *Invocation*, by *Sorrow* and *Repentance*, *Offerings* and *Sacrifices* ; and instructs his Children in the Knowledge of *Divine things*, and maintains *Religion* and the *Worship of God* in his *Family* : For we find *Cain* and *Abel* bringing their *Oblations* ; and *Seth* and *Enos* called upon the Name of the Lord ; and *Enoch* and *Noah* walked with *God*, *Gen.* 4. 4. 5. 26. *Gen.* 6. 9.

It cannot be doubted but that the Holy *Patriarchs* were careful in this Duty, as appears by that Character *God* gave of *Abraham*, in *Gen.* 18. 19. *I know him that he will command his Children and his Household after him ; and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do Justice and Judgment : to which they joyned Prayers and Praises, as a necessary Duty : And David saith, Morning and Evening, and at Noon will I Pray ; and you know Joshua's Resolution in this Duty, but as for me and my House, we will serve the Lord, Joshua* 24. 15.

These Men did not comply with the sinful Neglect of the Times : And, indeed, it's no thanks to be Religious, or go to Prayer with your Family, when it is the  
Humour

## to Masters of Families. 33

Humour and Fashion of the Times; for then you would be asham'd to neglect it, by reason others do it: The greatest Trial is, as it was with *Noah*, when we live in the midst of a corrupt Generation; for it is the Crown of Vertue to be Good, when there are all manner of Temptations to the contrary, when the greatest part of Men go the other way, when Vertue and Honesty are laugh'd at, and censur'd as an over-wise and affected Singularity. Thus it was with *Noah*, he contended with the Vices of the Age, and dared to own God and Religion in his Family, when almost all Mankind, besides himself and his Family, had rejected and thrown it off.

And although Masters of Families are so careless of this Duty, now it's grown out of Fashion, yet it is a Duty still. The *Primitive Christians* did Pray with their Families three times a Day, and looked on't as a great Sin to omit it; and, What can we expect from you who do not care to Worship God at all! Our bare being of the *Christian Religion*, or calling our selves Members of the *Church of England*, will avail but little without this Duty; and our Saviour hath intimated so much unto us in the *Lord's-Prayer*, by teaching us

us to Pray for our *Daily Bread*; and I need not tell you that you have Daily Wants to be supply'd; Wants for your selves, and Wants for your Children and Servants: Have you not Daily Infirmities both in your Self and Family to be healed? Are you not Daily subject to Dangers and Temptations? And do you not Daily Sin against God? And is it not necessary then that you Daily Pray unto God for the Supply of all your Wants? for the Healing of all your Infirmities? for the Preventing the Danger you are Daily subject to? for the Strengthening you against all your Temptations? for the Pardoning of all your Sins? Surely your Daily Wants, your Daily Infirmities, Daily Dangers, your Daily Temptations, and your Daily Sins, do all call upon you for your Daily Prayers in your Family: For your being a Member of that *Church*, I am sure will not excuse the Neglect thereof.

Besides, this I may be bold to affirm, That there is no *Church* this Day in the Christian World, that, in her Doctrine, doth encourage real Goodness more, or strive more to keep the Ballance even, that God may have the things that are God's, and Man the things that are Man's, than the

## to Masters of Families. 35

the Church we now live in: And how you will vindicate your self in the last day for this Neglect, I cannot tell: When you are exhorted in the Church, told in the Pulpit that it is your Duty, and God threatens the Neglect thereof with not owning you at the last Day, if you do not Pray with your Family at Home, as well as bring them to Church. Why will you profess your self Her Member, if you will not obey Her Doctrine? What do you go to Church for, only to drive away the time, or to act the part of a Hypocrite? Do you think the Minister is sent to Preach to you in Vain? If you think he doth not Preach the Truth, why will you go to Hear him? If he doth Preach the Truth, why will you not set about to Practice what he saith? Do you think that God takes no notice of the Neglect? or that He will not call you to an Account for it? Yes, yes, God takes Notice of you, as He said to the Prophet, *They came before thee as my People, and they hear my Words, but will not keep them*; and what our Saviour saith, in *Luke 19. 27. to the Unprofitable Servant*, may be said here; *But those mine Enemies which would not that I should Reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.*

*me.* Men perhaps cannot see this Neglect, but God and Angels see it; yes, and Devils too, which will all be Witnesses against you in the last Day of Account. O how will you wish, when you come to Die, you had performed this Duty more your self, instead of Laughing at those that do it; as too often I have heard some Men blame the *Dissenters* for their using *Extempore Prayers* in their *Families*, when they themselves use none at all in theirs; and think their bare being a Member of the *Church of England*, and going to *Church* once a Week, is a sufficient Service for Almighty God. If I am not mistaken, this has been your Fault, *Brother*; And will not this be an Argument against you in the last Day? And will not their using *Extempore Prayers* in their Family, condemn you for using none at all in yours? For while you condemn all those that are of another Perswasion, who are only Mistaken or Misled in some Texts of Scripture, or false Notions of other Mens, you condemn your own Neglect; and this all Men will allow, That he that is Misled in matter of Judgment, is more to be excused than that Man who lives contrary to a known Command; for the last is condemned

## to Masters of Families. 37

demned in his own Judgment, if he will but take time to consider it.

And let me tell you, *Brother*, you will find it a very beneficial and very easie Duty, when Love ingageth the Practice of it: for, What can there be more easie than to Pray to God, and to represent our Needs; and that we have our Needs supplied only for asking and desiring passionately and humbly? Can we buy any thing cheaper than at the rate of an Humble Prayer? Consider how many excellent Promises are made to Prayer; and that nothing disposes us more to receive the Grace of God, and a Blessing upon our Family, than Prayer: What can be more pleasant than this Duty of Prayer? when Christ unites them to his own, and bids us come for Relief and Pardon of our Sins: For Prayer can open the Gates of Heaven, and shut the Gates of Hell; it can open the Treasures of Rain, and soften the Iron Rocks till they melt into Tears: It is an Act of Grace, and the highest Honour that we Dust and Ashes are admitted to speak to the Eternal God, to run to Him as to a Father, to complain of our Burthens, to explicate our Scruples, to beg Remedy and Ease, Support and Com-

Comfort, Health and Safety, Counsel and Salvation.

And what can be more unreasonable than to neglect this Duty, upon which so many and so great Blessings, both upon your self and Family, do depend? How Unkind are you to your self, and not only so, but Unkind to all that are about you? I mean, Unkind to their Souls, and extreamly Uncharitable, to take no care at all of this Duty; for the Neglect of which God often sends great Judgments upon a whole Family, either by sore  
*Jer. 10.* Affliction, or sometimes, which is  
 25. worse, *Hardness and Blindness of Heart*; for the Word of God will certainly be fulfilled; he hath said, *That the House of the Wicked shall be overthrown*, *Prov. 14. 11.* And may not that be said to be a Wicked House, when neither Thou, nor thy Wife, (which should be Lights to the rest) nor Children, nor Servants, make Conscience of this Duty, to Worship God by Prayer? or if you or they chance to do it when you are in the Bed, it is with that Coldness and Sleepiness, that I may call it *none at all*, or at least Lip-Service, when the Heart is a Sleep; and by your Example, perhaps your Children and Servants think it not  
 their



## to Masters of Families. 39

their Duty to go to Prayers at all, neither Night nor Morning; and so they go to Bed, and rise the next Morning, like *Brutes*, without Calling upon that God, *in whom we Live, and Move, and have our Being.*

Therefore let me intreat you to take courage, to set about this Duty your self, that you may not have Sins of others to answer for, as well as your own; take up that brave Resolution of the Prophet *Joshua; But as for me and my House, we will Serve the Lord.*

As you are a *Master of a Family*, you have a place of *Trust* committed to you by God, who will certainly call you to an Account for it: For here you are commanded by God to act the part of a *King*, a *Father*, a *Priest*, and a *Judge*, over your little *Common-Wealth*; the Fourth Commandment tells you, that every Master of a Family must take care of his Sons and Daughters, his Man-servants and Maid-servants, and All within his Gates; not only to provide Food and Raiment for them, but to take care of their Souls, which is the better part: And here you are to act for God, you have the Charge from Him, not only of Bodies, but of Souls; therefore let not the Dignity of your place make you forget your Duty;  
for

for God will certainly call you and me to an Account, for what Good we have done in our Generations, and how far we have sought his Glory; and although I have only insisted upon your going to *Prayers with your Family*, yet that is not all you are to do, only I am in hopes if you would perform that, you could not easily neglect the other Duties; such as *Reading the Word of God, Singing of Psalms, Catechising, and Instructing your Children and Servants in True Christian Virtues*, and showing them their *Duty to God and Man*; to see if they thrive in Grace, or make Conscience of their *Duty to God* as well as to your *Self*: For I fear we shall have but little assurance of our own Salvation, except we endeavour the Reformation of our whole House, so far as lieth in our power: The mark of *Abraham's* Goodness was, *That he would command his Children and his Household after him*: And *David* in the 101<sup>st</sup> Psalm, declares his Resolution to this Duty: And Good Men in all Ages have carefully performed it; and the *Primitive Christians* were very strict in it. And can we think to go to Heaven a nearer way, when our Saviour hath commanded all Men to perform it? The Scripture condemns all those that neglect it;

## to Masters of Families. 43

it; for if we be ashamed to own Christ in our Families, and deny the Worship and Service that is due to Him here, He will deny us before his Father, and all his Saints and Angels, at the last Day; and then, How sad will our Condition be!

But I hope, *Dear Brother*, I may take it for granted, that you will neglect it no longer: For consider how great satisfaction it will be to you when you come to Die, that you have laid up a good Foundation for the time to come, a Treasure that no Devil can rob you of; a good Conscience then that you have discharged your Duty, will go further than Purse of Gold. O the Pleasure of looking back upon a well-spent Life in God's Service, and Reforming our Families to the best of our Powers! Methinks I see how charming it makes Death, and how it doth support us in our Sickness; arms us to bear the Pangs of Death through the Merits of Christ, and makes us die with Joy, with Hope, with Comfort and Salvation. Therefore let me intreat you once more, to take up that brave Resolution of the Prophet *Joshua*, *But as for me and my House, we will Serve the Lord.*

And, in the last place, let me advise you, in the words of *St. James*, chap. 5. v. 13.

## 44 A Friendly Letter, &c.

*Is any among you Afflicted? let him Pray. Is any Merry? let him sing Psalms. And avoid all vicious and prophane Songs, which corrupt the Mind; Singing nothing but Psalms, Hymns, and Divine Songs, which will raise the Mind to a Heavenly Frame; a Duty so practis'd by the Christians of old, that St. Hierom relates of the Place where he Lived, That you could not go into the Field, but you might hear the Ploughman at his Hal-lujahs, the Mower at his Hymns, and the Vine-Dresser Singing David's Psalms: So careful were they to follow the Apostle's Advice in Ephes. 5. 19. (with which I shall conclude) Speaking to your selves in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, Singing and making Melody in your Hearts to the Lord.*

*And, That you may be Stedfast, Unmovable, always abounding in the Works of the LORD,*

Is the Hearty Prayer of

Your Loving Brother,

S. W.

RULES

# THE RULES AND ORDERS OF A SOCIETY.

I. **T**hat the sole Design of this *Society* being to promote real Holiness of Heart and Life, it is absolutely necessary, That no Person should be admitted into this *Society* as a *Member*, but such as are well known to some of the *Society*, as to their Lives and Conversations, and that they are of the Church of *England*, as now Establish'd, and that they are frequent Communicants of the Lord's-Supper, and such as do endeavour to make themselves *Wise unto Salvation*.

II. Every *Member* shall meet (if he can conveniently) about Six of the Clock at the Place of Meeting, one Night in every Week, in order to encourage each other in Practical Holiness.

III. That at these Meetings no Person shall discourse of State-Affairs, nor in the way of Trade, nor any hot Controversial

points in Religion or Government; but that the whole drift of our Discourse be to glorifie God, and edifie one another in Love.

IV. There shall be *Two Stewards* chosen, by the majority of Voices, once every Year, or oftner, who shall receive all Weekly Contributions, and other Charities which shall come to the Disposal of this Society: And that on the Day of their going out they shall give an Account of their Receivings and Disbursements, and pay in the Overplus to their Successors; and no Money shall be paid by them to any Charitable Uses, or others, but what shall be first approved and agreed upon by the Society at a Meeting. And each Member shall give at their Entrance, and a Register shall be kept of Receipts and Distributions.

V. Every Member of this Society shall pay a Week towards the Charge of our Meeting, in *Chamber-Rent, Candles, &c.* and for Charitable Uses, if there be any Overplus; and Spiritual Charity is the rather to be recommended.

VI. If any Person of this Society shall fall into any scandalous Sin, that the Society having well inform'd themselves thereof, shall exclude him from any further Assembly.

Assembling with them till he shall give publick Testimony of his Repentance.

VII. At *Whitsontide* or *Christmas* there shall be a small Love-Feast, by the Consent of the whole, or major-part of the *Society*, with few Varieties, and at an easie Charge, to be defrayed by every *Members* contributing proportionably.

VIII. That if the major-part thinks proper, the *Minister* of the Parish for the time being shall be *President* of this *Society*.

IX. At their Meeting they shall observe this Method: As soon as some of the *Members* are come, if the *Stewards*, or either of them be there, he shall take the *Holy Bible*, and after saying the Prayer for the *second Sunday* in *Advent*, shall read a Chapter; after which, any one that thinks fit may discourse thereon, either by Explaining, for the Edification of others; or by asking Questions, for his own Information; or discoursing of any other Spiritual matter; all things being done decently and in order: After which he shall sing a Psalm, and then one of the *Stewards*, or any other at their request, shall begin Prayers, beginning with the Confession, the Lord's Prayer, with the Collects that follow it, and a Thanksgiving after Prayers, and so



conclude with a Psalm, and a Collect; and then the *Stewards*, or one of them, shall call over the Names, and receive the Contributions; and about 8 of the Clock, all the Business being dispatch'd, one of the *Stewards* shall read over these *Practical Rules*, and the whole at least Four times every Year.

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**Practical RULES** *to be observed by every Member, and read at every Meeting, after Prayers, when the Names are called over.*

1. **E**Very Member of this Society shall heartily endeavour, through God's Grace, strictly to observe the *Lord's-Day*, to sanctifie it, and not to neglect, if in Health, the Publick Ordinances of the Church, and not to walk in Publick Walks or Places, where much People go, tho' he be in good Company, to avoid the giving of Scandal to good Christians, and encouraging the Wicked in their Ways.

2. To receive the Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper* frequently, and to attend the publick Service and Worship of Almighty God on Week-days, as often as Conveniency will permit.

3. To

3. To watch strictly, that by no means any Action of our Lives, nor yet any of our Words, may bring any Scandal on the Holy Religion we profess, being Just in all our Dealings. And each *Member* shall encourage, in their respective Families and Stations, all manner of Religious Family Duties.

4. That every one endeavour to keep his Soul in an habitual Frame of Prayer, by setting the Lord always before his Face, and by making Spiritual Reflections upon every Occurrence of Providence.

5. That we do not wound our Conscience by a servile Compliance in wicked Company; but rather to reprove them, bearing Testimony to the Gospel of Christ as far as Conscience and Prudence do then permit us to do; and yet to shun all manner of Affectation and Moroseness, and be of a civil and obliging Deportment to all Men.

6. To avoid all wicked Company when we have not a lawful Call; and to abstain altogether from Play-Houses and Gaming-Houses, and from Ale-Houses or Taverns, except when doing of Business does require, and to arm our selves diligently against Excess upon any such Occasions.

7. To

7. To discountenance, as much as may be, any Discourse being divulg'd, whereby any Prejudice may arise to any *Member* of *this*, or any other *Society*, or any other Person whatsoever. And to take special Care to avoid entering at any time into any manner of Disputes, whether about Religion or Government, or other Matters, as being that which does *insensibly betray to Passion*.

8. To pray for the *Society* in our private Prayers, that God would preserve them, especially from Hypocrisie and Spiritual Pride, which is the Worm at the Root that will blast all; and that we be helpful one to another.

9. To exercise Mortification and Self-denial; and to keep a Monthly Fast, if Conveniency will admit, or Necessity require; at least to abstain from some Meals sometimes, which will much conduce to bring the Body into Subjection to the Soul.

10. That we endeavour that all our Discourse may be for the use of Edifying, and to minister Grace unto the Hearers, we will diligently apply our selves to the Reading the Holy Scriptures, and particularly such parts as are most fitted to our Capacities and Information; such as, amongst many others, is St. *Matthew* 5, 6, 7. *Romans* 12. *Ephesians* 5, 6. 1 *Thess.* 5.

11. That

11. That every one think it his indispensable Duty to take care of one anothers Soul, and not to suffer Sin to lie upon our Brother; and therefore if any *Member*, by long absenting himself from the Meeting, without known cause, does give just Occasion to suspect him of too much indifference, that then no Person shall think himself excus'd from the Obligation of striving to reclaim him, unless there be some fit Person or Persons, pitch'd upon by the *Society*, to go and do that Charitable Office, if there may be hope of his Recovery.

12. That we often consider (with an awful Dread of God's Wrath) the sad height to which the Sins of many are advanced in this our Nation, and the bleeding Divisions thereof in Church and State, and that every Member be ready to do what upon consulting with each other shall be thought advisable towards the Punishment of *publick Prophaneness*, according as the good Laws of our Land require to be put in Execution, and in pursuant of the King's Order and Proclamation.

13. To beware of rashly Judging or Censuring others who do not so much frequent Holy Duties as our selves; or upon any other account to express due Christian Charity

Charity to those of good Conversation, tho they dissent from us. And to examine our selves every Night, that our Repentance may be sincere, always evidenced by good Works.

14. If any *Member* of the *Society* be Sick, we do not forget to visit him, and others, where we see it may be convenient, that we may comfort each other in this to a better Life.

15. *Lastly*, That the Major-part of this *Society* may make what Alteration they shall think Necessary in these RULES; which done, they shall oblige each *Member* of this *Society* to performance, subscribing his Name hereunto, thereby to declare his Approbation of, and his Resolution and Endeavour to live up to them.

*Shorter Practical RULES to be read at every Meeting when there is not time for the longer; and fit for every Member to get by heart.*

I. **T**hat God's Glory be the end of all our Actions, 1 Cor. 10. 31.

II. That we Worship Him in Spirit and in Truth, John 4. 24.

III. That

III. That we love God above all things,  
and our Neighbours as our selves, *Mark*  
*12. 30, 31.*

IV. That we endeavour to make the  
Word of God the Rule of all our Actions,  
*Psal. 119. 9. 105. John 5. 39. Rom. 15. 4.*

V. That we keep the Lord's-Day Holy,  
*Exod. 20. 8. Isa. 58. 13.*

VI. That we stir up and exercise the  
Grace God hath given us, in going on  
from Virtue to Virtue, *2 Tim. 1. 5. 2 Pet.*  
*1. 5, 6, 7, 8. 1 Thess. 3. 12.*

VII. That we Pray Frequently, Fer-  
vent, Holy, and Persevering, *1 Thess. 5. 17.*  
*Luke 18.*

VIII. To be Just in all our Dealings,  
*Matt. 7. 12. Luke 6. 31.*

IX. To receive the Holy Sacrament fre-  
quently, *1 Cor. 11. 26. Luke 22. 19.*

X. To have Poverty of Spirit, Meekness,  
and Humility, *Matt. 5. 3, 5. Luke 14. 10.*

XI. To watch against Censuring our  
Neighbours, *Col. 3. 14. 1 Tim. 1. 5.*

XII. To use our selves to holy Thoughts  
in all Places, *Eph. 2. 5. Jer. 23. 23, 24.*  
*Heb. 4. 13. Psal. 139. 23.*

XIII. To examine our selves every  
Night, *Psal. 4. 4. 2 Cor. 13. 5.*

XIV. To be helpful one to another,  
*Cor. 12. 27.*

XV.

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XV. To Pray one for another, *1 Tim. 5. 15, 16.*

XVI. To exercise Tenderneſs and Compaſſion to all Men, *1 Theſſ. 5. 15.*

XVII. To ſhun all Occaſions of Evil, *1 Theſſ. 5. 22. 2 Tim. 2. 9.*

XVIII. To ſubdue the Body by Faſting, *Matt. 6. 16. Luke 2. 32. Act. 13. 2, 3.*

XIX. To make holy Reflections on our ſelves when we read the Bible, or hear the Word of God, *James 1. 22, 23, 24.*

XX. To endeavour to give no Scandal to the Holy Religion we profeſs, *Matt. 18. 7. 1 Cor. 10. 32.*

XXI. To avoid uncomely Jeſtings, and fooliſh Talking, *Eph. 5. 4, 25. Col. 4. 5.*

XXII. To Judge none that do not ſo much frequent Holy Duties as our ſelves, *Matt. 7. 1. Rom. 14. 13.*

XXIII. Laſtly, That we all endeavour to encourage pious Diſcourſe, and conſtant Meetings in our Societies, as well as enlarge it with ſuitable Members, *Mal. 3. 16, 17. Col. 6. 9. Heb. 10. 25. James 5. 20.*

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A Friendly Diſcourſe concerning Profane Curſing and Swearing. Wherein is ſhewed the Heinousneſs of thoſe Sin, and the Neceſſity of private Perſons giving Information to the Juſtices. Price Stitch'd, Two Pence. Sold at the ſame Place.



